

New Cymbals

Gear Guide

FOR 2015

By Bob Saydlowski

Long ago (like 1300 A.D. long ago), Turkish metalworkers started using a copper and tin mixture, heretofore named “bronze,” to create cymbals for Turkish music. Amazingly, centuries later the basic premise of cymbal making hasn’t really changed much — take some metal, roll it into a flat disc shape, then either hammer or lathe it, or both. Admittedly, many of today’s fine cymbals are cut and formed from large sheets of metal rather than individual castings. But no matter their origins, the result is an instrument made from musical bronze.

Other nuances of cymbal making have evolved, as well. Size and weight were the only classifications for cymbals until around the 1940s when a handful of terms like “ride” and “crash” further defined the shape, sound, and usage of a given cymbal. Today’s drummer has choices well beyond those few standard cymbal types with a plethora of sizes, weights, lathings, hammerings, bell size, bow profile, and — most of all — musical choices.

The “Turkish” cymbal is still the rage, even in the 21st century, as witnessed by the sheer number of companies redeveloping that old world style in today’s models.

Mainstays such as Zildjian, Sabian, and Paiste have seen a lot of other companies enter the marketplace in recent years, all vying for a piece of the proverbial pie, and there seems to be no end in sight to new and innovative ideas being applied to a musical instrument that — let’s face it — is otherwise fairly straightforward. But it’s really all about the sounds, and there are a ton of them. Let’s take a look at the latest crop.

RAW & UNBRIDLED

① Jumping headlong into the trend of unfinished Turkish-style cymbals, **Sabian** unveiled the Big And Ugly series — a

collection of six dark, organic, raw ride cymbals in 22" and 24" sizes, each with its own unique down-and-dirty patina. The series comprises the medium-dark AA Apollo, medium-light HH Pandora, the ultracomplex HH King, the dry HH Nova, an HHX Phoenix (22" only), and a medium-thin Xs20 Monarch (also in 22" only). All the cymbals might be “ugly” on the top, but the bottoms (except for the Nova and Pandora) are lathed and polished. The HH and HHX cymbals are \$731 to \$825 MSRP, depending on size, the AA Apollo ranges from \$550 to \$597, and the Xs20 comes in at a surprisingly affordable \$350 MSRP (which translates to a street price of a little over \$200). Be sure to check out our hands-on Big And Ugly review on page 78 of this issue, and surf over to Sabian.com to see some great demo videos of these cymbals.

Meinl’s 22" Byzance Big Apple Dark Ride has a similar appearance to the Sabian Pandora, with its raw look and over-hammering. The cymbal has a tiny bell, and a very dark finish. It’s said to deliver a full-bodied ping and complex sound character at \$780 MSRP.

② While not as raw-looking as the ones previously mentioned, **Zildjian’s** 21" K

① 24" HH Pandora and 22" Monarch from Sabian’s Big And Ugly Series





2 Zildjian's 21" K Custom Organic Ride

Custom Organic Ride has a natural appearance, and was developed along with artist/educator Pat Petrillo. The cymbal has a unique wire-brushed finish along with a brilliant finished bottom to open up the sound. For those of you interested in precise cymbal weights, Zildjian now specifies gram weights for many of its models (and even writes the weight under bells of K Kerope and K Constantinople models). For example, the Organic Ride is medium-thin, between 2,267 and 2,494 grams, and its MSRP is \$671.

3 By our count, the **Paiste Rude** was the original modern unlathed cymbal series, first introduced 35 long years ago. Now Paiste has come out with a new Dave Lombardo signature ride cymbal called the 22" Rude Power Ride (aka "Reign," based on the original cymbal used on Slayer's groundbreaking thrash album *Reign In Blood*). It's built to perform in extreme volume situations (unsurprisingly) and has a distinct metallic ping. The bell is quite large and looks to be lathed or grooved, unlike others in the Rude class. Made from CuSn8 bronze, the Reign Power Ride has an MSRP of \$604.

Jazz players will want to test drive the **Turkish Prestige Ride** — a very thin, very dry cymbal with twice the hammer points as most other cymbals and a raw appearance. 20", 21", 22", and 24" sizes are

available with prices ranging from \$460 to \$566. Also available in the new Prestige line are 13", 14", and 15" hi-hats (\$373-\$425).

Amedia added the new Supernova ride to its Dervish series. Two bands of deep hammering circle the bell and outer edge of the bow, interrupting the cymbal's hammered and unlathed finish. The Supernova is said to be very crashable, despite its dark character, with a defined stick sound. Unlike other Dervish models, it has a finely lathed underside. MSRP is \$716.

THOSE WERE THE DAYS

4 Mention the name Tony Williams and all drummers bow their heads in reverence.

Williams was a legendary drummer, playing at a young age with Miles Davis, and becoming an inspiration for many players as he set a new standard in drumming. The late drummer's widow Colleen Williams hand-carried the original Istanbul-made (we presume K) cymbals played by Williams on Miles Davis Quintet recordings (and given to him by Max Roach) to Turkey. She gave her blessing to **Istanbul Mehmet** to reproduce

the look and sound of those historic cymbals, and the company says it was able to precisely duplicate the instruments down to an identical taper, profile, bell shape, weight, and size. The Tony Williams Tribute Cymbal Limited Edition set is a 22" ride, 18" crash, and 14" hi-hats packaged with a leather cymbal bag, a collection of rare photographs of Williams, and a certificate of authenticity, all for \$3,550 MSRP. Only 250 sets will be made.

Speaking of "old world" cymbals, the handmade **Meinl**

Byzance Jazz Tradition cymbals are hand hammered in Turkey with banded wide-blade lathing on the playing surface to create an authentic Turkish jazz cymbal sound. Meinl is offering three new models — 20" Ride, 20" Light Ride (\$650 MSRP each), and 22" Flat Ride (\$780 MSRP), plus 14" hi-hats (\$730), all made of B20 bronze.



3 Paiste 22" Dave Lombardo Rude Power Ride (aka Reign)

That British one-man cymbal phenom otherwise known as **Matt Nolan Custom** introduced new handmade jazz ride cymbals carrying the mysterious name Klone. Nolan developed the cymbals after studying the old Turkish K profile as well as the work of



4 Istanbul Mehmet's Tony Williams Tribute Cymbal Limited Edition set

New Cymbals

Italian cymbalsmith Roberto Spizzichino. The 22" is made from B20 bronze and finished with a five-step aged patina that adds articulation and dryness to its complex trashy sound. Weight is around 2,600 grams, and the MSRP is \$779. Other sizes and weights are available upon request.



5 22" new generation DRK crash/ride cymbal by TRX

5 As the first cymbals from **TRX** designed for heavy hitters, the DRK series was among the company's flagship lines. But while its models and prices haven't budged, their manufacture has seen a significant upgrade since TRX moved operations to a new Turkish cymbal factory. Still available in 18", 19", 20", 21", and 22" crash/rides; 13", 14", and 15" hi-hats; 18", 20", and 22" Chinas; and 16", 18", and 20" vented crashes, you can expect new-generation DRK cymbals to be warmer, darker, and thinner than ever — a perfect recipe for fans of jazz cymbals. The official launch is scheduled for the Chicago Drum show, which happens to coincide with this issue's on-sale date.

6 Bosphorus EBC Series 21" Glassy Ride and 21" Rough Ride

Soultone introduced the Heavy Hammered Prototype series with deep and large hand hammering and thinner lathing. The company says the cymbals have a full-bodied, semitrashy sound, while still being rich and dark. Ride cymbals are available from 19" to 24" (MSRPs \$658–\$859), crash/rides from 18" to 22", crashes from 13" to 22", splashes from 6" to 12", and 10" to 24" China cymbals.

OLD SCHOOL GOES NEW SCHOOL

6 What comes to mind when you think about **Bosphorus'** many cymbal lines? You most likely envision traditional cymbals made in Istanbul, Turkey, singing with complex, jazzy sounds. But this year the company took an interesting detour with its new EBC Series, which was developed to complement electronic and techno dance music. Let's start at the center of the dark, dry 21" Rough Ride, where four extreme hammered indents increase trashiness and reduce resonance.



7 Meinl Byzance Extra Dry Dual Crash

Conversely, the medium-thin 21" Glassy Ride cascades with overtones, and features a lathed and hammered playing surface and an unusual zebra pattern on the underside. Both rides retail at \$665.45 MSRP. The 20" Bright Ride features an extra-large bell with line lathing on both sides, and carries a \$590.91 MSRP. New EBC crashes include the 18" Sibilant Crash (\$472.73 MSRP). Deeply hammered and lathed on top, with a natural finish on the bottom, its sound bursts with white noise, splitting the difference between a thin crash and China. Lathed but not hammered on both sides, the 19" EBC Full Crash sparkles with bright and clear sounds, which Bosphorus

describes as a "universal" crash with an MSRP of \$520. Completing the lineup is a 12" FX China (\$272.73), which features six small holes drilled around the center, barking with a short attack that emphasizes midrange frequencies. You can also look for the company's new 13" Noisy Hats, which live up to their name by pairing a very thick bottom cymbal with a big cup and a thinner top cymbal with an equally hefty cup. MSRP is \$590.91.

MASHUPS

7 An ongoing trend that shows no sign of waning, cymbal companies continue to explore the possibilities of combining raw and lathed surfaces on individual cymbals. **Meinl** has jumped onto that bandwagon with





8 T-rexist's new Organic (left) and Nexus cymbals

the Byzance Extra Dry Dual series, which feature thick dry-finished centers and thin lathed and brilliant-finished edges, with hand hammering performed in Turkey. As expected, there's a big contrast in sound between the two playing zones of these models, which include an 18" crash (\$540 MSRP), 20" and 22" crash/ride (\$650-\$780), and 15" hi-hats at \$860. Turning tables on the Dual concept, Meinl's new Ralph Peterson signature Symmetry and Nuance rides are made of B20 bronze. Both feature lathed centers and unlathed edges with big hammered bells. The 21" Nuance has six installed rivets (\$710) while the 22" Symmetry has a drier quality and complex wash (\$780).

TRX's new Blends cymbals are a mashup of the company's MDM and BRT lines, with a medium-weight lathed MDM

outer edge and a heavier, polished BRT inner area. The Blends series includes 20" to 23" rides (\$550-\$625 MSRP), 13" to 15" hi-hats (\$575-\$675), 16" to 21" crashes (\$375-\$575), and 8" to 12" splashes (\$225-\$275).

In an entirely different kind of mashup, **Paiste** has paired two alloy formulas — a CuSn20 Bronze top cymbal with a Signature Bronze bottom cymbal — to create the bite-sized 12" Signature Combo Crisp hi-hats. Stewart Copeland (known for his work with The Police, for those readers who have been living under a rock) teamed up with Paiste on the design, resulting in a crisp, finely articulated hi-hat sound. MSRP is \$696.

8 Custom cymbal company **T-rexist** (known for G-Series cymbals with the huge cross in the middle) introduces the Organic series — light- to

medium-weight cymbals with hammered raw finishes from the bell to the center, as well as a highly-polished center-to-edge, which makes the cymbal go from thick to thin. More aggressive players may be interested in the T-rexist Nexus, which is medium to heavy weight, and has a smoother lathing than most cymbals. Both the Organic and Nexus are cast B20 bronze, and available in any size you want, according to the company. T-rexist's price list shows MSRPs for cymbals up to 22" size (\$760; a typical 16" crash is \$470, while 14" hi-hats are \$600).

SPECIAL FX: NOT JUST FOR MOVIES

Slice 'em, dice 'em, bend 'em. Cymbals have taken on some weird characteristics lately. Swiss-cheesing cymbals with multiple holes has been the rage for quite some time. So it makes perfect sense for Swiss cymbal maker **Paiste** to climb onboard. The new PSTX effects cymbals use various hole sizes and layouts to achieve a variety of noisy/trashy/dirty sounds. The Swiss Thin Crashes are available in 14", 16", and 18" (at MSRPs of \$151, \$192, and \$232, respectively). There is also a 10" Swiss Splash at \$106, a 14" Swiss Flanger Crash at \$151, and a 14" Swiss Flanger Stack for \$302. Might as well get some hi-hats in the mix too, so the 10", 14", and 16" Swiss Hats are said to evoke a dry, noisy sound similar to the hi-hat sound of old analog drum machines. MSRPs on these "holey hats" run \$212, \$302, and \$384. By the way, the PSTX cymbals are made from the famous 2002 bronze, brass, and aluminum.

9 **Zildjian's** new 10" and 12" FX Spiral Stackers (\$162 and \$180 MSRP) expand upon the 18" Spiral Trash cymbal introduced a few years ago. These paper-thin cymbals are cut into a continuous spiral, but they aren't meant to hang down like a spiral tree. Instead, Spiral Stackers are designed to stack atop other cymbals for trashy sounds. When mounted flat, the sections also jump around for a cool visual effect. Hey — nothing wrong with showmanship!

Rather than having round holes, **Meinl HCS** Trash Stack cymbals feature elongated cutouts to boost their trash factor. Priced for the entry-level drummer, these brass alloy cymbals are sold as stackable pairs, featuring a top crash with surface cutouts and



9 Zildjian's FX Spiral Stacker

a China cymbal underneath. A 14" Trash Stack is \$130 MSRP and the 16" is \$184.

The endlessly innovative **Hammerax** has introduced two "cymbal enhancers": the 14" Chick Magnet (MAP \$89.97), which fits between your top and bottom hi-hat cymbals for a louder and more aggressive "chick" sound (hence its name), and the Super Collider (\$99.97), which instantly drops onto any cymbal (and comes right off, too) with no need for extra hardware, immediately

BRONZE 101

A quick education in cymbal alloys:

B8 is 92 percent copper and 8 percent tin, B10 is 90 percent copper and 10 percent tin, and B20 is 80 percent copper and 20 percent tin. NS12 mixes 12 percent nickel with the copper. A B20 cymbal requires more heating and rolling, and is therefore more expensive to produce, but a finished B20 cymbal is very musical, and perhaps the most popular mixture. Paiste's CuSn8 (as used on 2002 cymbals) is a phosphor bronze alloy using 8 percent tin, and the CuSn20 (their Formula 602 cymbals) uses 20 percent tin.



transforming any cymbal into an instant stack. You should also look for the new Snapshot stack (\$119.95) and the Slap, which comes in 7", 9", 11", and 13" for a loose hi-hat sound (\$99.97–\$129.97), which can be tightened sonically with the mounting wing nut.



10 The LP Cajon Hat

10 LP came up with a new idea for cajon players with the new Cajon Hat, which lets musicians add a hi-hat sound when playing cajon. Made of B20 bronze, the 9" Cajon Hats attach directly to a cajon with Velcro (no stand required) and have a specially designed indestructible striker, as well as an adjustment knob for tension between the cymbals. Not technically a special effect, but it's cool. MSRP is \$154.

WEIRD & WILD

11 Let's be real. **Hammerax** doesn't play by the rules. Take the company's new batch of alien-looking discs, for example,

11 The Hammerax Screech, Spanky, and Bash



which includes the Bash, a compact 8" double stack whose volume well exceeds its dinky size (MAP \$149.97). Even tinier is the Spanky, featuring two stacked 4" cymbals that react with an ultrafast, high-pitched tone, and are discreet enough to mount above a ride cymbal bell for fast accents on the fly (\$49.95). The Screech is a 14" double stack with an aggressive character (\$199.99), while the 11" Crash Course is a *triple-layer* stack of independent layers in a black finish (\$149.97). Adjust your mounting wing nut, and the Crash Course's sound zings from tight/fast to loose/splashy. The black-finish Hazard is an even bigger triple-layer stack, measuring 16" around, which yields an extremely complex sound (\$249.99). Hammerax's instruments are like no other cymbals you've seen. In fact, they only barely qualify as cymbals, but there you go.

12 A variation on the original Stingray unleashed three years ago, the new 22" **Amedia** Stingray Edge breaks conventional cymbal design with its three squared sides and one rounded edge. Medium-dark in sound, its bell is unhammered and unlathed with a brush finish, while the rest of the cymbal is treated with Amedia's standard Dervish finish. MSRP is \$806. Are you looking for a trashy multi-use cymbal? Amedia raises the bar with the 19" Aura Razr (\$610.94). Following a thorough hammering and lathing, the cymbal's playing



12 The Amedia Singray Edge has three squared sides and one rounded edge.

surface is treated to some intense indents and finished with cross-lathed milling. Claimed to have a very aggressive, loud sound, the Aura Razr has a similar



13 The Bee from Turkish Cymbals

appearance to the company's Antique series.

13 Another company that's trying to rethink the shape of cymbals, **Turkish Cymbals** has introduced the Bee, which sports its own warped shape, courtesy of a special proprietary lathing process. It reportedly sounds like a China cymbal mixed with a splash or crash, depending on its size, which can range from 8" to 22". That's a pretty wide span, so what exactly are they: rides, crashes, or splashes? Think of them instead as a family of effects cymbals that share a trashy attack, quick decay, and a groovy look on the drum riser. Play them however you choose.

DING DONG

Bell cymbals continue to be popular add-ons for any drummer or percussionist's arsenal. (I still use old Wuhan Jing cymbals for a cutting bell tone.) **Zildjian's** new 7.5" Volcano Cup Zil-Bel (\$218 MSRP) is made from B20 alloy and features an inverted bell (the same as the one found on the company's 19" K Custom Hybrid Trash Smash),



providing some unique tonal colors. The **Paiste** 2002 10" Mega Bell (\$226 MSRP) gives a piercing, heavy sustained bell sound, and for the first time, Paiste is using aluminum for the new 9" (\$97) and 10" (\$106) Pure Bells. If you're looking for a multitude of metallic sounds, check out the 11" **Hammerax** Chisel (MAP \$139.97). Sparkling with a bell-like shimmering sound, **Dream** Timsha finger cymbals are cast in the mountains of India and available in four sizes. Heavier than most finger cymbals, they may even make an interesting addition to a drum kit, if your stick can find such a tiny target. Street price begins at \$32.

UPGRADES & ADDITIONS

A few companies added models to existing lines in 2015, while others performed complete upgrades, like **Sabian**, whose new B8X series replaces the B8 line originally introduced back in 1984. (Wow, time sure flies!) Key improvements include more hammering, fully hammered bells, a dual lathing process, and adjusted profiles and bell sizes. Even more good news, the B8X series is priced the same as the old B8 and offers the same number of models.

Dream focused on targeted product extensions this year, beginning with two new

options for its Ignition packs, which feature individually cast hybrid-lathed B20 cymbals at surprisingly low prices. The new Ignition 3+ Pack bumps up the quality by combining a pair of 14" Ignition hats and an 18" Ignition crash with a pro-level 22" Contact crash/ride at an MSRP of \$440. Need even more bronze to bash? Then check out the new Ignition 4 Pack, which slips an 18" crash into the mix of 14" hi-hats, 16" crash, a 20" crash/ride, and a padded cymbal bag at a street price that hovers around \$495. Also new from Dream are two new hefty hi-hat models: the warm 16" Energy with micro lathing on the top and bottom (\$289 per pair), and explosive hand-lathed 16" Contact hi-hats (\$289 per pair).

Paiste added a 22" Medium Ride to the popular Formula 602 line, still made with CuSn20 bronze. The 602s are renowned for their sparkling ping and full wash, and the new 22" size bridges the gap between the 20" and 24" rides already offered in the series. \$924 MSRP.

Zildjian added a couple medium-weight models to its Kerope series, which launched to widespread acclaim last year with a selection of thin and medium-thin models. By setting the weight range in the 20" Kerope Medium to 2,126–2,381 grams and the 22" to 2,523–2,721 grams, the



14 Impression's new Illuminati splashes range from 6" to 12".

company managed to boost stick sound without sacrificing the line's rich, dark character. Teaming up with jazz drummer Adam Nussbaum, Zildjian also added a 20" K Constantinople Renaissance Ride as a new option to its existing 22" model. With its smaller size and bell, weighing in between 1,786 and 1,871 grams, the 20" offers an improved crash sound with complete rideability (if that's even a word). \$772 MSRP. Zildjian also rounded out the FX China line with new 8" and 10" thin Mini-China Trash cymbals, made from B20 alloy. MSRPs are \$185 and \$206.

Happy anniversary **Soultone!** To celebrate its tenth anniversary, the company assembled the NOA Cymbal Pack, a compact setup sized to conform to airline carry-on regulations without trading away pro sound. Featuring a 19" ride, 16" crash, and 13" hi-hats, all made of B20 alloy and packaged with a free cymbal bag, NOA cymbals combine the company's Gospel Series bell, Extreme Series bow, and Latin Prototype edge for an MSRP of \$666.50.

Meinl's Classics series received a brush-up this year, with a redesigned logo and new lathing pattern to keep things fresh. Still made in the company's German factory from B8 bronze alloy, the "new" Classics retain the bright sound that made them a favorite of rock drummers on a budget.

14 **Impression** added new splash and China cymbals to its Illuminati series, made from hand hammered B20 Bronze. The outer half of the playing surface is lathed with a traditional finish, while the inside is heavily hammered and polished, and the underside is fully lathed. Look for four sizes of splashes ranging from 6" to 12" (MSRP \$149 to \$215) and five China sizes from 10" to 18" (\$215–\$379).

HAVE IT YOUR WAY

Still haven't found what you're looking for? Rather than spend the rest of your days testing bronze in the cymbal room, you might consider the new Custom Cymbal Program at **Impression Cymbals**.

Go to the company's website, click on the Custom Cymbal link, and begin building the B20 cymbal of your dreams. Choose among rides, crashes, hi-hats, splashes, China-types, bells, or something otherwise indefinable in sizes ranging from 6" to 24".

Then get even pickier with the cymbal's profile, bell size, hammering, lathing, and numerous possible finishes. (Sandpaper? No problem!) Once the final design and production schedule is approved, Impression will bang it out and deliver it to a local dealer within 60–90 days. Prices are based on size and complexity — everything else is up to you. 

Silken designed the Meteoride Ride in 20", 21", and 22" sizes for high-volume play.

